



ENSEMBLES PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Paintings of Diego Rivera & Frida Kahlo in Movement Show



This world premiere dance project is an in-depth analysis of the works of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, which unearths elements inherent in Mexican culture that are deeply rooted in class differences. Director Zenón Barrón incorporates these into the language of dance in this selection of traditionally based choreographies by focusing on specific elements within the paintings. The dances described below are a small sample of what the show features.

A key element that fuels the creativity and development of this project is based on the lives of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, who were emblematic figures in Mexico's political development in the mid 1900's. Rivera was commissioned to paint several murals that reflected the political revolution of that era. Several of his paintings portrayed the rural farm worker whose only significance to the ruling class was to work the land. While many of these references echo the experiences of the Mexican community, the themes that both Kahlo and Rivera touched upon were so popular because they speak to our shared sense of compassion, justice, tradition, and unity. With our society becoming more diverse, and often more conflicted, these works represent our common struggles, and our shared joys.



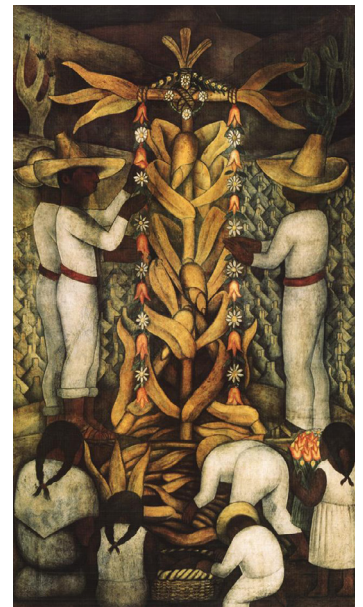
"Nude with Calla Lilies", a 1944 painting by Diego Rivera, highlights his fascination with women in which Rivera illustrated in several of his paintings different concepts of Mexican Art, taking us to the fields where Calla Lilies grow. This piece, so vibrant and feminine, is adapted to the dance style of 1944 Mexico.

After the Revolutionary movement of 1910-1920, Mexico was left quite demoralized by so much bloodshed. The Sandunga dance suite is faithful to the notion that the indigenous women of the region of Guerrero and Oaxaca were and still remain warriors who fought for their ideals and consistently maintained their customs and traditions during the political and cultural movements of that era. It essentially demonstrates how modern dance paved the way for the love of Mexican folk dance. At the time, visual arts symbolized various aspects of the Nation.

Sophisticated city dwellers congregated around in the street theatres that were housed in tents, which presented pieces by the most renowned painters of the time. Meanwhile, the higher classes traveled to towns to see regional dances and to learn the Jarabe and the Sandunga for their own parties. Over time, a specific style of Mexican modern dance emerged from these exchanges which assimilated traditional themes and movements of the indigenous people.

Director Zenón Barrón says of the painting "The Corn Festival":

"As the Artistic Director and choreographer of Ensembles, 'The Corn Festival' is for me Rivera's most evocative and reminiscent painting. It is interesting to note that this painter, like yours truly, was born in Guanajuato. It reminds me of part of my childhood, much of which was spent in the fields of the Santa Rosa Sierra in the state of Guanajuato. That is the very place in which I was born and raised with my family in the country, and through the years I observed how we celebrated the harvest of what we had sown during the year, and what we, after months of waiting, reaped."



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This painting gives thanks to Mother Earth for a bountiful harvest, showing how the families of surrounding communities gathered in celebration. This dance suite gives life to the colorful atmosphere of the Mexican farming families that inculcated an ethic of strength and unity in each of their loved ones. The music from this suite has African roots brought to Mexico during the era of slavery and later adopted by indigenous groups. The music is interpreted by Tamborileros (drummers), conjoining a mixture of emotions that the human spirit can manifest through whatever events take place in the everyday interactions with the Mexican people.

In November of 1930, Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera moved to the US for four years. San Francisco was their first residency abroad. Inspired by "Self Portrait at the Border Between Mexico and the US" this dance suite represents the route through which European cultures influenced Northern Mexico, creating a sound akin to country western music. The similarities between US and Mexican styles are traced back to shared Polish, Czechoslovakian and German roots, the result of which are a mix of steps from Polka and Chotis.

This marks a great opportunity for Frida Kahlo to appreciate the union of both cultures whose dance styles are rife with energy and vitality. Similarly, it was an opportunity for Frida's talent to be better known in the US.



This suite is especially dedicated to the memory of Albert Beber, a collector of Rivera's works who facilitated Diego and Frida's sojourn in the US, thereby paving the way for them to demonstrate their interest in cultural exchange.

Through Zenón Barrón's choreographies, Ensembles Ballet Folklórico de San Francisco and our musical accompaniments portray these themes described above through music and dance. The execution of this project is led by several key members with extensive experience. The performance piece is developed and led by artistic director Zenón Barrón. Zenón is a researcher of Mexican and Latin American folklore and costume design. Since the founding of Ensembles, Zenón has created countless original pieces that have deep rooted historical context.

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